CHAPTER I.

A Brief Account of Mayurbhanj and Its People.

Mayurbhanj, the Feudatory State in Orissa, of which the subject of this memoir, Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo, was Chief from 1882 till his premature death by accident in 1912, is a picturesque country. The hoary hills, mute witnesses of the mighty works of time, the lofty waterfalls and babbling brooks singing the song of eternity, the dark and deep sal forests sheltering all manner of wild animals, the cultivated valleys and plains, appeal alike to the artist and the man of action. The beautiful and interesting environment in which Sri Ram Chandra was born and lived, and the rich field for enterprise and development which his State afforded, contributed not a little to the growth of a character, the sympathy, conscientiousness, nobility and manliness of which earned the well-merited appreciation of all those with whom he came in contact. His interest ranged from the ancient history of the social and religious antiquities of the State to the most modern methods of its government and of the development of its resources. From the

date of his accession almost till the hour of his death, his whole heart and soul were devoted to the improvement of his heritage and the amelioration and upraising of the condition of its people, and the success which he achieved was due in no small measure to his love for the country of his birth and his realization of the trust placed upon him.

The field of his endeavours was no small one and provided a variety of problems to engage his attention and absorb his energies. Mayurbhanj State is 4,243 square miles in area, and is the premier State in Orissa in every respect, in size, in population, and in income. It is bounded on the north by the Midnapur and Singhbhum districts, on the south by the district of Balasore and by the State of Nilgiri, on the east by Balasore and Midnapur, and on the west by Singbhum and Keonjhar State. It comprises within its boundaries every variety of soil and scenery. The vast tracts of jungles and the group of hills present a striking contrast to the smiling plains of Bengal, where every inch of ground yields some produce to the cultivator; but nature has compensated for this, not simply by lavishing her beauty but also by bestowing a portion of her mineral and forest wealth, the exploitation of which contributes considerably to the income of the State and to the support of its inhabitants, and will do so to a very much greater extent by careful management in the future.

The Simlipal group of hills, occupying an area of about 900 square miles in the centre of the State, has not yet been geologically surveyed, but is believed to be composed mainly of the oldest formation of crystalline and metamorphic rock. Portions of the rest of the State were geologically surveyed at the instance of the Maharaja and traces of useful and valuable minerals were discovered in various places. Of these the only one which has been commercially exploited on a large scale up to date is the iron ore which occurs in large masses of very good quality in the Bahmanghatti subdivision. The Tata Iron and Steel Company took a lease of the iron mines on the Gurumahisani Hill in 1911 and get from there the whole of their supply of iron ore.

Red and yellow ochres occur at places but so far have been used only by the local people. Mica is found in small quantities and of inferior size and quality. Further exploration is necessary to discover whether it exists in workable form and this was under the consideration of the Maharaja just before his death.

A yellow fossiliferous limestone occurs at Mahulia, two miles south of Baripada, but is not of commercial value, though of great interest to geologists. Pot stones and soap stones of good quality are found in various places and are manufactured into household utensils of different kinds

and exported to Calcutta. Agate, flint, jasper, and other similar stones occur in the Bahmanghatti subdivision. The laterite, which covers large areas in the Sadar subdivision of the State, makes excellent building stone and the clay which underlies it is very suitable for some kinds of pottery.

Gold is washed in the Subarnarekha river on the border of Mayurbhanj, and in the Khadkai and Barhai rivers in the Bahmanghatti subdivision. There are alluvial deposits of gold at the headwaters of these rivers which provide a source of livelihood to a limited number of gold-washers of the State and neighbouring districts, but no native gold reefs have so far been discovered.

The forests of Mayurbhanj are valuable. Though large areas in the plains were ruthlessly destroyed in past generations, there are still considerable tracts of virgin and unspoilt forests in the Simlipal hills and other places. The policy of forest conservation initiated by the late Maharaja preserved these for systematic exploitation and ensured not only the preservation and continuance of the existing forests for commercial purposes and for meeting the household and agricultural needs of the people, but also contemplates the reafforestation of denuded tracts which are unsuitable for cultivation. Besides sal, which is the most prevalent, and commercially the most important tree, there are large areas of mixed forests containing such useful trees as Peasal

(Pterocarpus Marsupium) Sisu (Dalbergia Latifolia), Rohini (Soymida Febrifuga), Gamari (Gmelina Arboria), Karam (Adina Cordifolia), Assan (Terminalia Tomentosa), Champa (Michalia Champaka), and Kuchila (Strychnos Nux Vomica). Besides furnishing good timber, the forests provide large quantities of such miscellaneous products as myrabolams, nux vomica seed, kusum fruit, resin, charcoal, lac, tassar cocoons, simul cotton, tanning bark and medicinal roots and bark, the collection of and trade in which brings employment to large numbers of people and contributes considerably to the income of the State.

The State is well watered; the three main drainage areas being that of the Subarnarekha which touches the eastern boundary, that of the Baitarni which separates Mayurbhanj from Keonjhar on the west, and in the centre that of the Burabulang (great python), which has its source in the Simlipal hills and flows to the sea east of Balasore. The river system furnishes abundant facilities for irrigation of crops on a large scale, without which the continued fertility of the high lands cannot be assured. This fact was well appreciated by the Maharaja, who planned and carried out two large irrigation schemes and contemplated others of much greater magnitude. These will be described in more detail later. With the exception of these, the main sources of irrigation are from bandhs of

earthwork placed across the headwaters of small streams. Owing to the undulating nature of the land surface, these are of great value and irrigate considerable areas.

The soil in the valleys is fertile; that on the higher lands is poor, but capable of great development if properly irrigated and manured. The principal crops are autumn and winter rice, maize, millets such as bajra, pulses of which birhi, muga and kulthi are the most important, oilseeds as sarguja, til, and castor. Sugarcane, tobacco, jute, and hemp are grown in small quantities, and their cultivation is on the increase; while country vegetables do well and potatoes, cabbage, cauliflower and other foreign vegetables introduced in recent years have been successful and their cultivation is being gradually extended.

The manufacturing industries of the State are in the main of a primitive nature and provide goods for local consumption only. The chief exception to this is the weaving of tassar cloth which is done on considerable scale in Bahmanghatti and Olmara parganas. The cloth which is manufactured from local cocoons is of good quality and pleasing design and is exported in large quantities for sale, chiefly to the Central Provinces and Madras Presidency.

Coarse and strong cotton cloth is manufactured everywhere for local sale to the aboriginal population. The local blacksmiths are skilful in turning

out axes, spades, knives, sickles, etc., of very fair quality; the carpenters in addition to making ordinary household chattels, add to their profits by the manufacture of combs, beads, boxes and other fancy articles; the Domes and Mahalies are expert in the weaving of baskets, boxes, fans, and mats.

The population at the last census numbered 729,400. The great majority live by cultivation, but the aboriginal tribes earn a proportion of their livelihood by labour on earthwork, tree-felling and sawing, and collection of jungle produce, while many emigrate to work on railways, mines, etc., and in harvesting crops in neighbouring districts for some months in each year.

The aboriginal and semi-aboriginal tribes comprise over 70 per cent. of the whole population. The chief are the Santhals and next come the Kols, the Bhumijs and the Kurmis. Of these semi-Hinduized tribes the Bhuinyans, Bathuris, Pans, Gonds, and Khonds are the principal.

The pure Hindu castes form only about 14 per cent. of the population. The most numerous of these are the Gauras, and next come the Khandaits, followed by the Kamars, Kumhars, and Brahmans.

The people in general are very backward in education, which is confined at present chiefly to the Hindu element. The official language of the State and that most commonly used by the majority of the inhabitants is Uriya, but the aboriginal tribes

use their own languages as well, of which the most important and widely known is Santhali. The people, on the whole, are truthful, peaceable, and law-abiding. Some of the aboriginal tribes such as the Santhals, Bhuinyans, and Khonds are noted for their fidelity and hospitality. They are frank and honest, and simplicity and honesty characterise most of the wild and unsophisticated races. Every stranger entering a village is offered food and is an honoured guest as long as he remains. But those of the aboriginal tribes who have come in contact with town life and its resulting evils have lost their primitive simplicity and have become shrewd, artful, insincere, and litigious. The favourite drink of the aboriginal tribes is handia or pachwai (rice beer), which they use extensively on festive and ordinary occasions. Both Hindus and aborigines are addicted to opium-eating, more especially on the eastern side of the State.

The climate of the State is fairly healthy, but the hill and jungle tracts are malarious. Malarial fever is the most prevalent disease and accounts for the largest number of deaths. Dysentery is of frequent occurrence: while cholera and small-pox make their appearance in epidemic form at intervals, but thanks to the efficient medical service and preventive measures established by the late Chief, they do not now assume serious proportions.

CHAPTER II.

A Short History of the Raj Family.

Materials for an authentic and detailed history of Mayurbhanj State and its ruling family from its foundation till modern times are non-existent. Brief references are found in some tales of local wars and accounts of travels, but beyond this there is nothing but verbal tradition as preserved in the family to account for its origin and progress. It may be accepted as sufficiently authentic to show that Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra was the descendant of a long line of ancestors of good family, capable and bold in asserting and maintaining their rights and safeguarding their territory but not turbulent or wantonly oppressive, fighting for their own when the need arose, but in general living in peace with their neighbours so long as the latter remained at peace with them.

According to tradition, recorded by Sir William Hunter, Mayurbhanj was founded more than 2,000 years ago, but according to the tradition and chronicles found in possession of the late State Chhamukaran Damodar Pattnaik about 1,300 years ago, by Jai Singh, a relative of the then Maharaja of Jaipur, in Rajputana. Jai Singh came on a pilgrimage

to the shrine of Jagannath at Puri and, according to one account, married the daughter of Gajapati, Raja of Puri, and received Hariharpur as dowry; but according to the local tradition he came to Puri with his two sons, Adi Singh and Jati Singh, the elder of whom was married to the daughter of the Raja of Puri.

When returning home Jai Singh overthrew a chieftain named Mayurdhwaja, then holding the gadi of Bahmanghatti, and assumed the title of "Bhanj," meaning "Breaker," which accounts for the present name of the State. Bahmanghatti is regarded ever since that date as the original place of residence of the Raj family. In every State seal the design of a peacock was introduced as a family distinction. It is a curious fact that the peacock is also a heraldic bird of Rajputana, where, as well as in Mayurbhanj, the killing of the sacred bird is prohibited. This may be merely a coincidence, or it may be corroborative evidence of the Rajput origin of the Mayurbhanj Chiefs.

Jai Singh settled in Mayurbhanj and ruled there from 598 to 618 A.D. He divided the territory of Hariharpur, which comprised both Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar, between his two sons. Adi Singh, the elder, got Mayurbhanj and built his fort at Adipur, while Jati Singh got Keonjhar and made his headquarters at Jatipur, on the opposite bank of the Baitarni. Adi Bhanj succeeded his father and

ruled from 618 to 656. He divided his territory into 22 provinces and appointed over each a Sarbarakar, whose duty it was to support his Chief in war and to realize the revenue, half of which he paid to the Chief and half he retained as his own reward. The office of Sarbarakar was hereditary on condition of continued loyalty and obedience.

Adi Bhanj was followed by his son, Nilambar Bhanj, who died in 689. Nilambar Bhanj had two sons, Kishore Bhanj and Laksman Raj Bhanj, but the elder brother being absent on a pilgrimage at the time of his father's death the younger was placed on the gadi. Kishore Bhanj on his return accepted the situation and was provided with certain territory for his maintenance. His descendants hold some revenue-free villages in Pargana Adipur to this day.

During the administration of Laksman Raj Bhanj, the Sarbarakar of Joshipur (formerly Daspur) rebelled and was defeated in a fight in which many aboriginal soldiers were killed on both sides.

Laksman Raj Bhanj was succeeded in 726 by his eldest son, Biseswar Bhanj. His second son, Jagadiswar Bhanj, by dint of cleverness and intelligence, became the Raja of Kanika, in Cuttack district. Biseswar Bhanj turning an oppressor, the subjects, with the help of several Sarbarakars, broke out in rebellion. Biseswar Bhanj, with the help of Raja Ananta Bhanj of Keonjhar, quelled the rebellion, beheaded the rebellious Sarbarakars, and

appointed new ones in their place. The Sarbarakars of Simlipal, Bahmangatti, and Joshipur remained faithful to their Chief during this rebellion and were, therefore, liberally rewarded. After Biseswar Bhanj his only son, Bharat Bhanj, ruled from 764 to 804. He was a very good and pious Chief, who took particular interest in the welfare of his subjects. He was so very religious that he would not take any food without performing the due religious rites and reading the sacred Shastras every day. He freely gave charity to the poor and the distressed, so much so that the balance in his treasury never reached a thousand rupees. During his rule the people lived in perfect peace and happiness. He had two sons, the elder of whom, Dilipeswar Bhanj, succeeded his father. He was an able administrator and the people lived in peace under him, no one daring to do harm to his neighbour. But, unlike his father, instead of spending his money for the public good, he stored his treasury with valuable things. His younger brother, Madhusudan, while out on a hunting excursion, was killed by a tiger. Dilipeswar Bhanj was succeeded by his son, Bamandev Bhanj, in 839. He was very intelligent and physically strong too. He died in 878 and was followed by his son, Basudev, who ruled till 916. Basudev had two sons, Keshari Bhanj and Harihar Bhanj. The former succeeded his father, and the latter became Raja of Keonjhar,

as the then Raja, Santai Bhanj, had no son. Keshari's son and successor, Narayan Bhanj (960—996), has the reputation of having been cruel and oppressive. His son, Nilkantha Bhanj, followed him and was in turn succeeded, in 1028, by his son, Birkeswar Bhanj, who was fond of learning. Birkeswar's eldest son, Kapileswar, followed him on the gadi in 1064 and expelled his three younger brothers from the State on learning that they were plotting against him. On his death in 1100, he was succeeded by his son, Trilochan, who ruled till 1138. Trilochan's eldest son, Rajkishore Shan, had died before his father, who was therefore succeeded by his youngest son, Dasarthi Bhanj (1138—1164). He is reputed to have been wise and intelligent but severe withal. He dismissed and punished several Sarbarakars for disobedience, and in the course of his pursuit of them he removed his headquarters from Adipur, which had hitherto been the capital, and built garhs successively at Simlipal, Kainsari, and Karkachia. He was followed by his son, Srikrishna, who built the Khuradia Garh, and dealt even-handed justice to all and treated all people with equal consideration till his death in 1195. Srikrishna was succeeded by his son, Gadadhar, who died in 1236, and his son, Aruneswar Bhanj, ruled in turn till 1264. He imposed heavy taxes on the people, and built the temples of Kinchakeswari and Siva at Adipur. These temples still

exist and contain many carvings and statues of considerable antiquarian and religious interest. Aruneswar Bhanj was succeeded by his son, Gopinath Bhanj, who was followed in 1279 by his son, Radhakrishna Bhanj, who in his turn gave place to Prithwinath Bhanj in 1301. As Prithwinath Bhanj had no son, he adopted Baikuntha Bhanj, the youngest son of Raja Trilochan Bhanj of Keonjhar, who succeeded his adoptive father and ruled from 1334 to 1360. This is the first break in the direct line of descent, a member of the collateral branch becoming the Chief of Mayurbhanj.

Baikuntha Bhanj had four sons, the eldest of whom was killed by his brothers, of whom the youngest, Bireswar, was elected Raja. Bireswar was of a religious turn of mind and built the Rahani Garh and the temple of Siva at Khuradia. As he had no son, he adopted Ram Chandra Bhanj, the son of his second brother, who ruled from 1390 to 1423. He built a garh and a temple of Siva at Mantri. A grand annual fair is still held at Mantri on the day of the Sivaratri, and the temple built by him still exists. Part of the jungle *mahal* adjoining Midnapur was attacked by him and added to his territories under the name of Bhanja-bhumi. His elder son, Balabhadra Bhanj, succeeded him in 1423 and reigned till 1464. He consulted his younger brother, Narayan Bhanj, in all matters. He excavated a big tank at Amarda, which remains

unique in size and purity to this day. As the Sarbarakar of Nilgiri died without a son, he appointed his own son by his second wife Raja of Nilgiri and entrusted him with the charge of Kainsari, Kaptipada, and Nilgiri. Balabhadra was succeeded in 1464 by Harekrishna Bhanj, his son by his first wife, who built a garh and several temples at Hariharpur. The ruins of these still exist and are noted for their curious and elaborate brick carvings and traceries, many of which are still in a good state of preservation. His son, Nilkantha Bhanj, succeeded him in 1491 and was in turn followed in 1520 by his son, Santhai Bhanj. Santhai Bhanj made over Bhanja-bhumi to the Raja of Midnapur. He was an able administrator and well versed in arms. The big tank at Baripada and the Baghsamal Garh owe their origin to him. He had two sons, Baidynath Bhanj and Jagadiswar Bhanj, and was succeeded by the former in 1556. Baidynath Bhanj was converted to the worship of Vishnu and the temples of Haribalava Dev Mahaprabhu, Natmandir, and Goondichamandir at Baripada are monuments to his fame and piety. The people lived in safety, peace and happiness during his administration. He was succeeded by his son, Jagannath Bhanj, in 1600, who attacked the pargana of Khelar belonging to the Zamindar of Nayagram, in Midnapur, but as the latter, appearing before him, acknowledged submission in a respectful

manner, Jagannath Bhanj was pleased with him and made over the pargana to him. He was a wise and experienced administrator, always eager to promote the welfare of his people, and so after his death he was deeply mourned by all his subjects. He was succeeded by his son, Harihar Bhanj, in 1643, who was noted for his severity. During his rule the punishment for theft was death. He died in 1688, and was succeeded by his son, Sarbeswar, who was in turn followed in 1711 by his son, Bikramaditya Bhanj. As the Raja of Nilgiri died without any issue, Bikramaditya made his youngest brother's son, Dasarath, the Raja of Nilgiri.

About this period we find one of the few references to Mayurbhanj in contemporary Indian history. In the "Riyāz-us-Sālātin" of Ghulam Hussain Salim, it is recorded that when Ali Verdi Khan was marching against Murshid Quli Khan in Orissa in 1741, he was opposed at Rajghat on the Subarnarekha river by Raja Jagardhar Bhanj of Mayurbhanj. Ali Verdi Khan asked help of the Raja, which was refused, whereupon he bombarded the Raja's entrenchments from the opposite bank of the river and the Raja and his forces were compelled to withdraw. Ali Verdi Khan crossed the river and met and defeated Murshid Quli Khan near Balasore, and after settling Orissa returned to Bengal. The Governor of Orissa, whom he had appointed, was shortly afterwards ousted by Mirza

Baqir, son-in-law of Murshid Quli Khan, and Ali Verdi Khan had again to march on Orissa in 1742, where he defeated and expelled the usurper. The "Riyāz-us-Sālātin" then goes on to relate that as Jagat Isar, Raja of Mayurbhanj, apparently the same Raja as the historian names Jagardhar before, had taken sides with Mirza Baqir. Ali Verdi Khan, after subduing the latter, came back to Balasore and set about punishing the Raja, who was then at his palace at Hariharpur. The Raja, relying on his forces, resisted, but was at length compelled to flee "to the top of a hill and hide himself in a secret fastness beyond the ken of discovery. Ali Verdi Khan then subjugated the tract of Mayurbhanj, showed no quarter, and mercilessly carried fire and sword through its limits."

The "Seir Mutaqherin" gives a somewhat different account of these events. In it we find that "the Raja of Mayurbhanj had exceedingly harassed the army proceeding to Orissa, being under personal attachment to Mirza-Baqir." The Viceroy Ali Verdi Khan therefore destined him to punishment. When Ali Verdi was returning victorious from Orissa "the Raja threw himself into the arms of Mustapa Khan (Ali Verdi's Afghan General) who interceded vigorously for him. This intercession had no effect in softening Ali Verdi. The Raja, however, relying apparently on the power of Mustapha Khan to protect him, presented himself

at the camp without a safe conduct, and he and all his suite were incontinently put to death, by Mir-jaafer Khan, and his country was thereafter plundered and sacked. Mustapha Khan naturally considered this a great affront and dishonour to himself. Scarcely was the invasion of Mayurbhanj finished when the Mahrattas appeared in Bengal, and Ali Verdi Khan hurrying to meet them was surrounded and in danger of destruction. Mustapha Khan and his Afghan colleagues displayed a mutinous spirit and showed no energy in repelling the Mahrattas; and this incident of the murder of the Raja of Mayurbhanj was put forward as one of their principal grievances. Ali Verdi Khan, however, threw himself on the magnanimity of his General and won him over.

Though this narrative shows that the Raja of Mayurbhanj took a part in struggles of that time in Orissa, there is no mention of those events in the family traditions. These state that the Raja of that time was one Raghunath Bhanj, who ruled from 1728 to 1750, and having no heir adopted Chakradhar Bhanj, the second son of the Raja of Keonjhar, who ruled till 1761. But the account in the "Seir Mutaqherin" is probably accurate, the historian being a contemporary and a friend of Ali Verdi's family; and it seems probable that the adoption of Chakradhar Bhanj from the collateral branch of the family in Keonjhar was necessitated

by the fact that the Raja with his heirs, if he had any, perished as described at the hands of Ali Verdi Khan.

Chakradhar Bhanj was succeeded by his son, Damodar Bhanj, who had two wives—Sumitra Devi and Jamuna Devi—but no son. At the time of his death he nominated Tribikram Dev, son of Balbhadra Bhanj, Raja of Keonjhar, as his heir; but his wives, instead of carrying out his instructions, ruled themselves. The officers of the State tried to make over the administration to Tribikram, but did not succeed. Rani Sumitra Devi Bhanj ruled from 1796 to 1805, and was followed by the second Rani, who ruled for some years and was then succeeded by Tribikram Bhanj.

In 1782, during the rule of Damodar Bhanj, we find the first reference to Mayurbhanj State in British records. In 1784 the Raja voluntarily agreed to pay a tribute of £320 a year to the British Government, which sum was reduced in 1812. Sir William Hunter notes that from that time, till our expulsion of the Mahrattas in 1803, the State seems to have remained in "a chronic condition of invasion, insurrection, and internecine feud. Since our accession foreign invasion has ceased, and seven years later we put a stop to internal commotions by definitely recognizing one of the claimants as Raja, and supporting him in his office with a high hand." The rule of the two Ranis appears, therefore, to have been a very disturbed one, and it is probable

that they only held it as against rival claimants by virtue of their right of possession. The State came under British control with the conquest of Orissa in 1803, prior to which it had been feudatory to the Mahrattas; but owing to there being no definitely recognized Chief, no treaty was concluded with it in 1803 or 1804, as was done with the other States of Orissa, and it was, therefore, not included in the list of States mentioned in section 36 of Regulation XII of 1805. After Tribikram Bhanj was finally recognized as Raja in 1810, a treaty was concluded with him in 1812, in which the tribute of the State was fixed at Rs. 1,001, and the Raja agreed, amongst other things, to forego his claim to levy a tax on pilgrims who had to pass through the State on their journey to and from Jagannath. Tribikram Bhanj executed a second ekrarnama in 1815.

Tribikram Bhanj died in 1822 and was succeeded by his son, Jadhunath Bhanj, who entered into a treaty engagement with the British Government in 1829, binding himself over to maintain himself in submission and loyalty to the East India Company's service, and for himself, his heirs, and successors, to pay annually in perpetuity as peshkash sicca Rs. 1,001 to that Government, and, after providing for the extradition of offenders and the passage of the troops of the East India Company through his territories, further engaged himself, in the event of any neighbouring Raja or other person offering

opposition to the East India Company's government, to depute a contingent of his own troops to act in concert with those of the Company to coerce and bring such Raja or other person into subjection.

Jadhunath Bhanj was an able and enlightened ruler for his time. He was kind, charitable, and devoted to the welfare of his subjects and was in the good graces of Government. He dismissed several Sarbarakars for their acts of injustice and oppression and appointed his own Tahsildars in their places. The Sarbarakar of Bahmanghatti, Narendra Mahapatra, created a disturbance which was put down with some difficulty, and Bahmanghatti was taken under the direct control of the Chief. Only the Sarbarakar of Kaptipada was allowed to retain his office, and his successors do so to this day, though they have frequently proved refractory subjects, asserting a quasi-independence even in the time of Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra, to whom the then Sarbarakar gave much trouble.

Jadunath Bhanj was succeeded by his son, Srinath Bhanj, in 1863, but as, in order to understand and appreciate the share which Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra had in developing the State of Mayurbhanj, and the foundation on which he had to work, a short but rather more detailed account of its administration under Srinath Chandra and his successor Krishna Chandra appears necessary, this may more conveniently form the subject of a separate chapter.